

Q210

Please share anything that you think is useful to aid the Scientific Integrity Program in revising how the Scientific Integrity Policy addresses interactions between EPA scientists and the media.

<sup>1</sup> NA

<sup>2</sup> I think the Scientific Integrity Program needs to focus less on constantly surveying staff about their views of implementation, and focus more on Senior Leadership misconduct in this realm.

<sup>3</sup> N/A

<sup>4</sup> Basically I'm told to not ever talk to the media. I have to refer them to Public Affairs. Seems weird considering they may not be on site with me at the time the media approaches. (b) (5)

<sup>5</sup> Allow EPA staff to discuss differing issues without control of the (b) (6) managers including Team Leads.

<sup>6</sup> No comment

<sup>7</sup> Media training for (b) (6) scientists would be helpful.

<sup>8</sup> In my (b) (6) career, speaking with the media or public has never been encouraged or allowed.

<sup>9</sup>

Scientists should be able to speak up their minds as long as they do not represent the EPA, but they fear retaliation in any given context regardless of the adm.

<sup>10</sup> Media interactions should be coordinated and governed by EPA Comms/media staff. Scientists should not be required to speak with the media.

<sup>11</sup>

During the last presidential administration, (b) (6), (b) (5). I feel like there is a difficult line to draw (but it needs to be drawn) between one's professional capacity and one's personal capacity. I do not feel like I can share my scientific viewpoints on social media at all, and that would also extend to media. This is one clear area that separates EPA scientists from academic scientists. We are not free to speak our minds, even in a personal capacity on social media or to mass media.

<sup>12</sup> I have said enough.

<sup>13</sup> Assure that the work being discussed has the required quality assurance / quality control documentation available.

<sup>14</sup> Having a clear, concise, and consistent message stating what the EPA does for the public would help increase public trust in the Agency. Also, more effort and resources for outreach programs promoting citizen science and environmental justice for the Agency would better boost public confidence in the Agency.

<sup>15</sup> None.

<sup>16</sup> I don't trust much of the agenda-driven media to report accurately.

<sup>17</sup> Stop basing decisions on policy and use actual science...EJ and climate change are not good places to be working from...

<sup>18</sup> There is far far far too much top down control. Media relations at EPA is far too bureaucratic, and too often prevents scientific experts from showcasing the great work that we do in (b) (6).

<sup>19</sup> This survey is startting to get a little long.

<sup>20</sup> The general rule seems to be that all media communications go through FOIA or (b) (6). My understanding is that any EPA employee would need permission to speak on behalf of the Agency. I don't see how one could speak on EPA-related work in a personal capacity.

<sup>21</sup> I think there should be a barrier between the press and the scientists directly- which there is. But the press will reach out to the scientists directly sometimes.

<sup>22</sup> na

<sup>23</sup> I support EPA allowing scientists to speak to the media again.

<sup>24</sup> Media training is important for our scientists.

<sup>25</sup> Everyone in (b) (6) should receive the media training.

<sup>26</sup>

(b) (6) was a lying, evil pawn for anti-science politicians and their lobbyists. Don't ask him to interact with the media on behalf of EPA or its scientists.

<sup>27</sup> I think there is a great amount of diversity here in terms of individual comfort interacting with the media, especially without support in a one on one interview type of situation.

<sup>28</sup> I have previously taken a media communication course for scientist and engineers at another agency and thought it was super helpful. I think more courses like that would be very useful.

<sup>29</sup> (b) (6) staff rarely gets opportunity to speak directly to media. Usually controlled by (b) (6).

<sup>30</sup> Outside news outlet requested an interview about my research. (b) (5), (b) (6)

, so I did not provide an interview.

<sup>31</sup> I think there is a divide on personal beliefs and the official statements

<sup>32</sup> Again lots of layers of approval that take a long time to obtain. Many times we miss our opportunity to get our science out there in a timely manner.

<sup>33</sup> Provide training on how EPA Scientists are to interact w/ media

<sup>34</sup> Just like the OIG, the scientific integrity program should have its own media relations team that operates independent from (b) (6) so that we remove the opportunity for (b) (6) to censor science in order to support political leadership that disagrees with scientific integrity and scientific developments and products that are in conflict with EPA policy and political choices.

<sup>35</sup> Nothing

<sup>36</sup> While during the past two years on occasion I was permitted to speak with journalists/reporters directly with someone from (b) (6) present, on most occasions I was only allowed to provide written answers to questions, and in some cases I was not permitted to be interviewed.

<sup>37</sup> None.

<sup>38</sup> No comment.

<sup>39</sup> n/A

<sup>40</sup> It should be encouraged.

<sup>41</sup> n/a i dont talk to the media



EPA is so uptight about media and social media that (b) (6)

and refuse to talk about my work even on anonymous platforms like Reddit. (b) (5)

and have never been permitted to speak to the media without front office/PR people in the room or on the line. We are strongly discouraged from discussing our work with the media.

<sup>43</sup> Please use various social media sites and not just EPA.gov.

<sup>44</sup> We have been strongly discouraged from ever talking to the media. I believe that we all have PTSD from the last Administration with even thinking of talking to the media. We basically were under a gag order whether they called it that or not. People were very very afraid.

<sup>45</sup> Up until now, I have felt discouraged from speaking to the media because the review process has been unclear. The only training I was give was "Don't talk to the media, tell them to call (b) (6) communications."

<sup>46</sup> Mentioning DSOs should not be required, but if a scientist has a DSO, they must state their opinion is a DSO and explain what that means in clear terms.

<sup>47</sup> N/A

<sup>48</sup> should be more proactive to communicate what is really going on at EPA, not let misinformation lead the conversation. Need a much stronger, meaningful and responsive social media presence

<sup>49</sup> (b) (5) (and i work in (b) (6)!). additionally, i was never able to speak with the media on the phone, it was always written responses. EVERYTHING went through HQ.

<sup>50</sup> Need to be cognizant of the "unintended consequences" of SI as well as transparency. There is an "administrative" cost to the scientists associated with these activities that reduce scientific productivity and ultimately individual PI PARS and promotion potential especially in small research groups.

<sup>51</sup> Adhere to Scientific Integrity Program requirements.

<sup>52</sup> I am not involved in these types of interactions. So I have no opinion.

<sup>53</sup> Talking to the media is about story telling and controlling our message. We like scientific integrity until it does not help us with our story: (b) (5)

[REDACTED]

Science cannot decide societal values.

<sup>54</sup> It is a long standing policy in EPA that staff are not to speak to the media, and any requests should be referred to the press office. This policy has been in place to ensure consistency of communication by the media, but it needs to be reevaluated and potentially revised.

<sup>55</sup> N/A

<sup>56</sup> Entire process is unclear.

<sup>57</sup> Make training and refresher training mandatory prior to any interactions, a written summary of the interaction is shared with PAO and the supervisor as soon as the interaction is over, and make sure everyone knows that there is no such thing as "off the record", no matter what anyone says.

<sup>58</sup> N/A

<sup>59</sup> EPA needs to do more media outreach instead of only reacting to media inquiries. EPA also needs to have more agency staff and scientists spotlighted and doing the actual interviews with the media rather than generic canned statements from the communications office.

<sup>60</sup> I think that greater efforts should be made to facilitate scientific communications between the Agency and the public in multiple formats (social media, podcasts, online forums, etc.) as transparency will convey scientific integrity and also better educated the public on what we do and the smaller efforts we make on a regular basis to enforce environmental protections.

<sup>61</sup> Just want to point out that although the questions in this survey are mostly appropriately aimed to focus on interactions between EPA scientists and the media, as a (b) (6) I am aware that the Policy also applies to non-scientists at EPA in how we convey information and I have cited it when working cooperatively with program clients to figure out how to accurately describe information in press releases about enforcement cases.

<sup>62</sup>

EPA scientists need to be free to express their own positions and research on a variety of environmental topics with proper training on what to say and what not to say to media outlets. All opinions expressed by EPA scientists should be allowed with EPA scientist mentioning that their opinions do not necessarily reflect those of EPA.

<sup>63</sup> N/A

<sup>64</sup> Ensure that the EPA staff responding to media requests are qualified and experienced in the specific areas related to the interview.

<sup>65</sup>

Given the polarity of the media environment at this time, I have difficulty seeing a positive justification for an EPA scientist to engage with the media. The Agency should devote significant resources to public relations that informs the beneficiaries of our work about the value and applicability in their lives. Get to where the rubber hits the road, most people will not take the time to understand the science. I support transparent presentations of science that include differing opinion analysis and description instead. Applications that feed information that people need or want are important. The steep decline to near nothing of general environmental education and outreach unless statutorily mandated is detrimental to the Agency because it allows unchallenged misconceptions and misrepresentations.

<sup>66</sup>

While respecting the role of the (b) (6) to communicate agency information and respond to press, in my multi-decade experience at EPA, it now overreaches in controlling communication from programs and experts. (b) (5)



<sup>67</sup> Nothing to share.

<sup>68</sup> There should be clear guidance (policies, procedures and training) for all staff on how to address interactions with the media

<sup>69</sup> I work largely in policy, we get questions about things we are working on. I prefer to have public affairs respond with my input.

<sup>70</sup> Practice makes perfect

<sup>71</sup> It is currently unclear to me what the process is for media uploads. Availability of media uploads seems to depend on the staff or program that is requesting media support.

<sup>72</sup>

This process has recently gotten better (new administration). Prior, I was told by reporters that they didn't even bother to contact us knowing that approvals to speak to use would be cumbersome (or there would not be approval) or delay their work.

<sup>73</sup> (b) (6) is a helpful buffer - they generally can communicate with media in terms that might be better understood

<sup>74</sup> We've got a long way back, it would be good to have an inclusive event that helps the Agency steer back into a place of trust.

<sup>75</sup> Science is not the only product as we need to engage the triple bottom line, social, economic and environment.

<sup>76</sup> As an (b) (6) I do talk with the media periodically and only discuss items associated with my work activities.

<sup>77</sup> More clarity would be appreciated.

<sup>78</sup> n/a

<sup>79</sup> The whole written response thing is unworkable. We miss deadlines all the time and reporters just give up and all the good work EPA does goes unreported.

<sup>80</sup> N/A

<sup>81</sup> Thank goodness scientific integrity is back. The politicos, despite their clumsiness, actually hurt. I like the direction. Charge hard right now to cement the advances. There is very little time.

Make communications and (b) (6) personnel work hand-in-hand with scientists. I've seen this improve over the (b) (6) I've been with EPA, but it could still use work. A specific communications or (b) (6) contact should be assigned to each project and kept involved and informed as the project moves forward. Scientists don't always know when it is appropriate to communicate results, and (b) (6) doesn't always know how to interpret results. Scientists and communicators need each other.

<sup>83</sup> Let the scientists do the talking.

<sup>84</sup> Difficult question. Some supervisory / managerial judgement likely needs to be in play. No issue with vast majority of interactions with the media. Most players know their boundaries. A few individuals do have a habit of speaking outside their area of expertise and misstate facts.

<sup>85</sup> N/A

<sup>86</sup> I do not interact with the media

<sup>87</sup> I have no experience on the topic.

<sup>88</sup> None

<sup>89</sup>

Would be good to supply a 1 page summary of guidelines on this topic to everyone.

<sup>90</sup> N/A

<sup>91</sup> Clear and consistent messaging is important when communicating with media on behalf of the Agency. Those who do so are seen as representing all of us.

<sup>92</sup> No Comments

<sup>93</sup> (b) (5)

<sup>94</sup> When approached by the media I refer that inquiry to our media people ... and then I focus on my job (b) (6)



As someone relatively new in the agency, I do not know how to address the media/public and the only guidance I have gotten about it is, "Don't-- contact your supervisor immediately" (b) (5), (b) (6)

(b) (6). Some basic training would be helpful so there is an idea of what to do if you are contacted about your research and what you can and cannot say, because currently I have no idea.

<sup>96</sup> We should encourage more conversations with reporters (staffed by (b) (6), who can indeed be helpful), rather than rely on minimal written responses to questions. Better educated reporters do a better job of covering EPA and other science-driven agencies.

<sup>97</sup> (b) (6) needs to reply more quickly and efficiently to media requests. I don't like having an (b) (6) rep on the line during interviews, but I accept it because I think they have every right to know what I'm saying. However, I have missed chances to share valuable information with targeted audiences (b) (5), (b) (6)

(b) (6) (this is a problem that goes back years and years). (b) (5), (b) (6)

(b) (6) I saw the unprofessional, juvenile way that some (b) (6) political staff treated legitimate media inquiries over the past four years -- why on earth would I want someone like that being able to interrupt an interview I was doing?

<sup>98</sup> The recent changes to not require regional (b) (6) officials to get approval from HQ (b) (6) was a great and needed change.

<sup>99</sup> More training and information would be helpful. (b) (5)

(b) (6) And what's appropriate or not about what we talk about with the media, especially regarding work that is currently in progress?

<sup>100</sup> People seem to like to be informed of the CORRECT information and not from a second hand source. I believe that this process or policy will only work if whomever is in office believe in the process to function as it was designed.

<sup>101</sup> No opinion

<sup>102</sup> A training on media speaking.

<sup>103</sup>

One must be careful because the media may spin the conversation to their benefit.

<sup>104</sup> I think more training for EPA scientists in this area would be helpful.

<sup>105</sup> We have been told we should not speak to the media and should refer any calls from the media to our communications staff. There seems to be concern over staff speaking to the media. I understand there are some risks in speaking to media so would approach with caution.

<sup>106</sup> It is generally not worth it to talk to media. I am generally not interested in conveying either EPA senior management party line and I generally do not trust most media in understanding or fair representation of the issues.

<sup>107</sup> Having the (b) (6) or other EPA Press staff assisting in media interviews is quite helpful in keeping the conversation on time and focused. Always been helpful to have them involved.

<sup>108</sup> During the previous administration it was clear that we could not talk to the media - any interactions had to be handled at the agency level

<sup>109</sup> I have no useful information to share.

<sup>110</sup> If there are any, can they be shared across the agency so those of us not in science know what EPA science is being shared in the media?

<sup>111</sup>

Please find guardrails to ensure the SI policy cannot simply be discarded or that the IG can be removed and replaced with an ideology inconsistent with truth, honesty.

<sup>112</sup>

The process has improved. I can talk to the media, as long as EPA knows about it.

<sup>113</sup> It would be helpful for EPA to publicize the new administration's stance on scientists talking to the media and the procedure when staff are approached by members of the media/public. A mass mailer would work

<sup>114</sup> NA

<sup>115</sup> I have been asked multiple times over the years to speak with reporters/journalists about my research but have never been granted access. (b) (5), (b) (6)

<sup>116</sup> The EPA should be an agency grounded on science (this is not the case with all federal agencies). As long as there are political appointees at the EPA, there will always be some degree of conflict between science and politics.

<sup>117</sup> NONE

<sup>118</sup> Scientific integrity is foundational to everything we do. I appreciate everyone at EPA who ensures it is maintained.

<sup>119</sup> I think the collaborative process (b) (6) has works well with media inquiries.

<sup>120</sup> In the last 10 years, the ability of EPA scientists and technical staff has been greatly diminished. Instead only (b) (6) staff and (b) (6) leaders talk to the media and they use greatly watered down talking points that are devoid of substance. This is true for more than just the last 2 years.

<sup>121</sup> Perhaps scientists with any potential to interact with the media can be identified and contacted for their interest in media training.

<sup>122</sup> I have no training on interviewing with the media and requests for interviews have come on very short notice (e.g. 24-48 hours) which does not allow time for coaching or other preparation. I have either provided material to someone else to provide an interview or provided written responses.

<sup>123</sup> Nothing at this time.

<sup>124</sup> No Comment.



<sup>125</sup> Since anything online lasts forever, how can those scientists that interact with the media now be assured that they won't be retaliated against in the future if a different administration with different priorities comes long?

<sup>126</sup> I think media training would be a good idea!

<sup>127</sup> NA

<sup>128</sup> That the scientists providing the information get to review it before it goes final, to assure that "making the information accessible" does not equate to "changing the information (usually unintentionally). Also, EPA might benefit from science communicators--many communications people do not have a scientific background so it can be challenging for some to communicate science.

<sup>129</sup> '-Diluting information and/or selecting not to speak about a topic is damaging. This happened quite often during the pandemic ((b) (5)

that was never taken into consideration by the Agency or publicly addressed. The EPA lost trust from the public/media.

<sup>130</sup> There is a tremendous amount of management and communication staff gate-keeping and message control in scientist interaction with media and other external parties. Sometimes, this helps protect the scientist and the organization, but there is very little room for EPA scientists to express an independent scientific opinion on a topic.

<sup>131</sup> I think it's important to have credible EPA scientist interact with the media. However, they need to be trained in science communication. The message needs to be simple. This is difficult, but can be mastered with proper training and experience. (The ((b) (6)) offers excellent training, which I have taken.) This past year, my favorite example of a credible scientist is ((b) (6)). He was quite effective when he was allowed to speak. I would like to see people like him speak on behalf of EPA with regard to issues like ((b) (5))

<sup>132</sup> Have the courage to let Experts talk for themselves. Why are we allowing managers to talk for expert??? Allow experts to convey their expertise.

<sup>133</sup> EPA guidelines and legal documents applicable to my current role; Agency's supports for legal/administrative consultations in terms of the conflicting issues in the line of work duty; open the agency's environments to bring the new technology and science products into our everyday workplace

<sup>134</sup> I think media training is a good idea. Your communications team should be helpful and have a good disposition.

<sup>135</sup> In an effort to make science understandable, Public affairs and/or management may make changes to a document which alters the context of the original information. I do not believe this is done intentionally. However, information can become "watered down" in order to improve understanding. In this process, important context can get lost.

<sup>136</sup> N/A

<sup>137</sup> Required media training.

<sup>138</sup> All scientists should have training for how to interact with the media. Having an understanding of ways to communicate with the media can help inform how scientists formulate communications materials, even if they don't directly interact with the media.

<sup>139</sup> Word choice is everything and staff media personnel lack technical knowledge to accurately communicate technical information to the public.

<sup>140</sup> None

<sup>141</sup> I don't need to speak to the media as part of my normal job duties.

<sup>142</sup> Climate was already added back to Air, Climate, and Energy so that is a good start. Plus we have now have a webpage again addressing climate.

<sup>143</sup> There is a culture of only responding to media in writing, after several levels of review. I think the office needs to be more open with media to build trust and transparency. That said, I don't know how comfortable I am speaking about aspects of my work since it can be controversial.

<sup>144</sup> EPA is in a glass fish bowl with respect to public and politics. Better to work through management and Agency public affairs. Just need to continue to stress and enforce scientific integrity with these information gate keepers.

<sup>145</sup> I've watched managers exclude and speak for the scientists rather than letting the scientists speak for themselves. While it's good for the managers and gives a more polished performance when delivering the information, it is demoralizing and debilitating for the scientists. Better to teach them how to speak well for themselves and simply have their managers present.

<sup>146</sup>

I have no experience nor foresee my interactions via EPA scientists and the media.

<sup>147</sup> EPA scientists and technical staff are generally not allowed to speak to the media. Only the communications staff can speak to the media.

<sup>148</sup> Stop suppressing knowledge. Stop kissing up to industry and do your job.

<sup>149</sup> We have been directed by management that we are not to speak to the media. Regardless, I am comfortable speaking to the media on issues, but would prefer that (b) (6) does it or is at least present.

<sup>150</sup> transparency and be specific on science use and limitations.

<sup>151</sup> I have no feedback. My office typically does not "own" the data and reports that we produce. It would very rarely be appropriate for one of our scientists to be directly interacting with the media on project specifics.

<sup>152</sup>

We are under a blanket order to not respond to any outside questions. All such are referred to Division Director for a decision to ignore or refer to Communications.

<sup>153</sup> It is often difficult for scientists to communicate with non-scientists due to the knowledge gap